

# The Thesis Statement<sup>3</sup>

The thesis statement is the backbone of the research paper. The thesis is a one sentence statement that presents your conclusions about your topic based on research. The thesis statement takes time and research to develop and cannot be made up without solid support to back it up. You may not discover your final thesis statement until you have completed most of your research and in most cases, your thesis will change several times as you work. It is important to remember that you are NOT writing a report. You are proving something about that event or person. Below are tips and suggestions for developing a strong thesis statement.

A thesis is NOT...

- a description of your paper topic.
- a question.
- a statement of fact.
- a statement of opinion.

A thesis...

- is developed from research questions posed during your reading.
- is an arguable point. (It is your job to provide evidence to support your argument)
- is the conclusion of all your research.

Examples - Topic: Sacajawea

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Is this an effective thesis?</i>
"This paper is about the life of Sacajawea"	NO
"Why was Sacajawea so important to the Lewis and Clark Expedition?"	NO
"I think that Sacajawea was important to the Lewis and Clark Expedition."	NO
"The purpose of the this paper is to discuss the importance of Sacajawea to the Lewis and Clark Expedition."	NO
"Sacajawea was critical to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition because of her knowledge of languages, geography, and natural remedies."	YES

Use the following formula to help you develop your thesis statement:

**THESIS = Topic + *Your Position/Argument* + 2-3 Main Points (Supporting examples)**

*Sacajawea was critical to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition because of her knowledge of languages, geography, and natural remedies.*

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<sup>3</sup> This page has been adapted from: Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 47-48.